The Sketch

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ALEXANDER'S ROYAL GODSON.

Three generations of royal ladies are baby-worshipping in this group, taken after the christening of the younger son of the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester. It shows THE QUEEN, *the* DUCHESS OF GLOUCESTER, *holding* PRINCE RICHARD ALEXANDER WALTER GEORGE, *and* QUEEN MARY; *and, in front,* PRINCE MICHAEL *and* PRINCESS ALEXANDRA OF KENT. *Archbishop the Lord Lang of Lambeth baptised the baby at a private chapel in the country, and his sponsors were the Queen (who held him), Princess Marie Louise, Lady May Abel Smith (proxy for Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone), Lady Sybil Phipps, Lady Margaret Alexander (proxy for her husband, General the Hon. Sir Harold Alexander), the Duke of Buccleuch, and the Marquess of Cambridge.*

MOTLEY NOTES.

By ALAN KEMP.

Knocking About. A good many things, and a few people, are at their most interesting when they are in ruins. Restore the Acropolis or the Colosseum, and what would they be? There is nothing which attracts the American visitor more than "one of the ruins that Cromwell knocked about a bit." But Cromwell was only an amateur compared with some of the modern knockers-about, and it seems that after the war a ceaseless stream of tourists will pour upon us to see some of the ruins that Hitler knocked about a bit. If we haven't enough ruins to satisfy them, all we have to do is to take a bulldozer and ram a few of our surviving public buildings. All of us would have some useful suggestions, I am sure.

THE SADIST.

DRAWN BY STARKE.

Rehabilitation.

But before we do that, we must provide some suitable accommodation for the tourists. Some of them are rather choosey, having been spoiled by central heating and all sorts of pampering gadgets. They may find the Olde Worlde interesting to look at, but not so good to live in. Mr. Bevin is anxious. He says we must develop a really first-class tourist trade to make England better understood—and incidentally, perhaps, to help repair some of our shattered fortunes. For this purpose hotels are needed. But hotels—those few which have not been requisitioned—have also been knocked about a bit. Even when they are standing entire, they cannot get a lick of paint or a stick of furniture or a spot of labour. The hôteliers are asking how they can turn their establishments into Grand Babylons, fit for the exacting tastes of the post-war tourists, when they cannot get any of these necessities?

Learning the Job. I don't know. Hotels, of course, are not alone in these deprivations. But I fancy that paint and plaster are not the only things needed to raise the standard of British hotel comfort. It seems to me that, as a nation, we have got the wrong idea about hotel-keeping. It is a highly professional, a very expert, business (you can read all about it in Arnold Bennett's "Imperial Palace"); we allow much of it to be done by amateurs. Of course, there are hotels in England, and especially in London, which can compare with any in the world; but I know of important cities (they shall be nameless) where there is not a decent place to stay at. I know of whole tracts of the country (let them, too, be unnamed) where practically all the hotels are still mouldy mid-Victorian. I know also of many an arty-crafty pub. run by arty-crafty persons who are only doing this job because they are not good for anything else, and who think that the science of hotel-keeping consists in having a few Van Gogh sunflowers on the walls, and a few badly-cooked foreign dishes and a few unusual and inferior wines. Phonus-bolonus! We have not realised, as Continentals do, that this is a business which takes years to learn, working from the bottom up and through all the branches. Regarded in that way, a very fascinating business it is—but it does not come by the light of nature.

Value for Money. To me—and I claim a fairly wide practical acquaintance with the matter—the most surprising thing about English hotels is their lack of standard. It is complained that in America hotels are "standardised"—that every hotel is like every other. That is far from true; there is plenty of character about American hotels.

"Miscast, don't you think, Agatha? I like him best when he's knocking people's blocks off!"

DRAWN BY A. T. SMITH.

SALVAGE ALL YOUR OLD LETTERS—FOR VICTORY

What is true is that wherever you go in U.S.A. you can rely on getting a certain minimum of comfort and convenience. In England you never know what you are going to get until you get it. There is no common standard up to which a hotel has to live—or lose its customers. The odd thing is that this makes little difference to price. In the country, you will pay as much, or nearly as much, at an execrably run hotel (all stewed prunes and rice) as at a really well-conducted one with a certain pride in itself. The public does not demand, as it should, value for its money.

A Matter of Luck.

My experience has been that in England you find the best hotels in the most unexpected places. I know, certainly, of three hotels in England which are really run *like* hotels, and they are all in places where you would never look for first-rate accommodation. The best of them, I need hardly say, is managed by a Swiss. And so it is all a matter of luck. But I don't think it can remain so if we are going to make England that tourist paradise which Mr. Bevin sees in his dreams. You can't do it just by regulating catering wages. You have got to train up a profession of hôteliers who are prepared to devote their lives to the job and know it from end to end. Where is such a training to be obtained in this country? It may exist, but I never heard of it.

Women Scorned.

It is an opportunity for our girls—why not? Why not Mine Hostesses just as accomplished and prosperous as Mine Hosts? There ought to be plenty of them in the making among the Naafis and Fanys. Anyhow, the girls will have to be thinking about this career or some other because, after the present matrimonial spate has subsided, I am afraid there will be a good many Unclaimed Blessings left over. I see that there is now a Spinsters' Association, a hundred thousand strong—formidable thought! They say that they are slighted, put upon, women scorned; for Social Security does not promise them a pension at fifty-five. I should have thought that no class in the community needed a pension more, for it is a bleak prospect indeed, that of old and penurious spinsterhood. You may ask: "Can we afford it?" But surely you know the answer to that one: "Can we afford not to afford it?" I don't know what it means, and I don't think it means anything; but we ought to know better by now than to haggle about a few hundred or thousand millions here or there, when the war has cost £24,000,000,000.

Spring Cleaning.

And yet I am not as convinced as I should like to be that all the boons and blessings are going to turn out as rosily as we are told. I see that the petitioners are now at work, as well as the planners. I have received two requests in the past week to sign petitions to the Government, telling them exactly how to inaugurate the New Jerusalem and urging them to get on with the job at once. There are so many Brave New Worlds offered us that the choice becomes embarrassing. Well, I have never been a worshipper at the shrine of Mr. George Bernard Shaw, but he does have the good fortune occasionally to say something with which I agree, and here is one of the somethings: "Do not deceive yourself: the world is not going to be a new world: you will have to put up with the old one with occasional spring cleanings in which a good deal of the dirt will be swept under the furniture instead of being removed."

The Little Something.

Still, old world or new world, spinsters have their rights. Another, and a very intimidating, group of them have been asserting those rights. The policewomen are complaining that their uniforms are lacking in *chic*. The Home Secretary is disposed to agree; he told the House of Commons the other day that his own observations had led him to the conclusion that the costume was "capable of improvement in certain respects" and that the attention of H.M. Government would be directed to "nattiness of headgear." This is wise and opportune; the honourable initials P.C. should stand not only for Police Constable, but for Personal Charm. A little P.C. and S.A. will do far more to restrain incipient lawlessness than the garb of Plain-Jane-and-No-Nonsense. Basing myself, like Mr. Herbert Morrison, on personal observation, I should say that the Americans are far more successful than ourselves in the design of feminine uniforms. They somehow seem to introduce the Little Something—a great aid to efficiency!

"And soon we shall have all we've been fighting for, Connie—silk stockings, chocolates, face-cream and onions!"

DRAWN BY BEAUCHAMP.

[Continued overleaf.

In the Bag. But charm, from the days of the Garden of Eden, has had its drawbacks. It is driving people to do terrible things. I read of silk stockings in the official bag of a Government Department! No, they were not samples; they were not the subject of a report, investigation, White Paper or Royal Commission. They were a gift from an official, in a land where silk stockings grow, to two colleagues in this land, where silk stockings are no more. The sex of the colleagues is not stated. I cannot find it in my heart to censure these conspirators too severely. Almost any crime is justified to save a shapely leg from nudity. It is the weakest part of P.C. (as all sculptors have found) and it is a spectacle to which I shall never become reconciled.

On the Toes. Male legs do not make any pretensions—they are merely sticks to stand on, at all events since we encased them in tubular trousers. But they are coming in for a certain amount of criticism. The *doyen* of American chiropodists has stated publicly that they are not sufficiently "curvesome." He says that if men want curvesome legs, to vie with stone balustrades or inverted Burgundy bottles, they ought to wear high heels. Masculine reader, have you ever, in your lighter moments, tried on a pair of women's high-heeled shoes? It is a most remarkable sensation. You feel as if you are going to pitch forward on your nose at any moment. You marvel how any human being can achieve this extraordinary balancing feat. I can well understand that a chiropodist would recommend it, in the interests of his profession. But it is carrying P.C. too far. Even at the cost of curves, let us show our superiority by preserving our balance and keeping both feet firmly on the ground. This is more important than another precaution which I recently heard recommended by a public speaker, of "keeping both ears to the ground." I don't know how this contortionist act is done.

"How silly of me, dear. For the moment I thought you had forgotten to put the tea-leaf in!"

DRAWN BY STYX.

For Export Only. Some of these experiments in glamour are really very exasperating, and I doubt whether the public will stand them. We have been told that Great Britain, besides being the world's chief tourist centre, is going to lead the world in fashion and is preparing for a great output of "luxury frocks." Whether these creations are all going to consist of spun glass or soya-bean plastics, I do not know, but we are assured that they are going to be eye-filling and irresistible. But they are all for export! The oppressed peoples of Europe are to have them, but the oppressed women of England are still to "make do" and go about in Utility sackcloth. I cannot think that the Spinsters' Union are going to take this tamely, especially at a time when men have defeated Utility and can have as many pockets and gussets as they like. I advise Dr. Dalton to provide himself with shin-pads—if he can get any.

Getting On. Many years ago, young and impressionable, I stood in a field and saw an Intrepid Aviator named B. C. Hucks cavorting in the sky and even looping the loop. It was very wonderful, and it was well worth the half-crown which I paid to see it. Then I remember that another bird-man flew the Atlantic, and New York went mad and covered Fifth Avenue knee-deep in paper streamers. To-day I read that the Atlantic has now been flown twenty thousand times and the Himalayas three times a day. We're getting on! Mars next, I think—and not a bad place for post-war residence!

"She is frightfully extravagant with the polish, but I must say I can see my face in the floors and furniture."
"Some maids are terribly thoughtless!"

DRAWN BY WELLAND.

The grand name of FIGHTER COMMAND, R.A.F., *having returned to its own on the extinction of A.D.G.B., our artist made a point of visiting its Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Air Marshal Sir Roderic Hill, and picturing him in his own particular manner, together with some senior officers. Air Vice-Marshal W. B. Callaway is Senior Air Staff Officer, and Air Commodore G. H. Ambler (of Cambridge rowing fame) his Deputy. Air Commodore R. L. R. Atcherley is a hero of Schneider Trophy days, and Wing-Commander W. F. Blackadder, the Rugger International.*

CARICATURES BY FRED MAY.

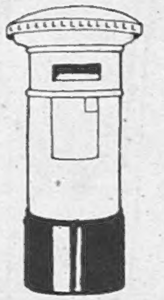
The one-hundred-and-first of our SERIES OF PLATES IN FULL COLOUR *published in this issue of "The Sketch" is by* DAVID WRIGHT.

"LOOK, GEORGE, THE ALL-CLEAR *MUST* HAVE BEEN SOUNDED!"

DRAWN BY FRANK REYNOLDS.

Please forward

By JOYCE DENNYS.



MY DEAR ROBERT—Last week posters appeared up and down the Street which said, "GIVE A GOOD BOOK IN AID OF THE RED CROSS." I was pleased when I saw them, for I thought it must mean that books of a religious nature were needed, and as I haven't got any it absolved me from all responsibility.

To part with even one of the tattered and incongruous volumes which form what I am pleased to call my Library is, for me, worse than losing a front tooth. Sometimes I wake in the night and writhe to think of the books I have lent to people and never seen again. Once I groaned aloud and woke Charles. "What is the matter, Henrietta ? " he said. "Have you got a pain ? "

"No, Charles, but I keep thinking of that copy of 'Barchester Towers' which I lent somebody and never got back."

"For crying out loud ! " said Charles, and went to sleep again.

So I was rather dismayed when I met Mrs. Savernack, who was running the Good Book Drive, and she said, "Now, Henrietta," and pointed at one of the posters.

"Pointed at one of the posters."

"The only Good Book I have is 'The Pilgrim's Progress,' " I said, "and it belonged to Charles's mother."

"Don't be silly, Henrietta," said Mrs. Savernack, who prefixes nearly all her remarks to me with these words. "Any sort of book will do. Goodness knows there 's enough literary rubbish in your house ! "

Saddened by this conversation, I went home to look at my books, and ran my fingers lovingly along their well-worn backs. No, I 'd be damned if I 'd give away any of my old friends. They might as well ask me to give Perry away to the Red Cross, or even Charles. Then Conscience raised its ugly head. "No Doodle-Bugs," it whispered, "and you can't even spare a book." I sighed, and went back to the shelves and took one down. "The Princess and Curdie," only a kids' book, after all, and Bill and the Linnet grown up. But what about grandchildren ? "Not on your life ! " I said loudly, and put it back and took down another. "Elegant Woman"—not the sort of book one read, but ah ! the delicious illustrations ! I put it back. "Brush Up Your French"; that had been on the shelf a good many years, and had I brushed up my French ? No. But one never knew. Any moment it might become imperative that my French be brushed up—after the war—*après la guerre*—or was it *le guerre* ? I put it back.

But next morning I did manage to wrest a few volumes from the shelves and took them down to the Good Book depôt. As I handed them in I felt like a mother delivering her children to an orphanage.

"Is that all ? " said Mrs. Savernack, in a grudging way.

Books were stacked all over the floor and on the counter. On a shelf in the corner I saw a complete edition of Fielding. I took one down ; it was bound in calf, and as I held it in my hand little shivers went up and down my spine. "What 's going to happen to these books ? " I asked.

"Pulp," said Mrs. Savernack.

"But it 's monstrous ! It 's frightful ! It 's a crime ! " I cried, getting red in the face. "Here we are stuck down here : no theatre, no music ; the only thing which stops us from becoming screaming savages is books, and now——"

"Pulp, all pulp," said Mrs. Savernack, who dislikes books as some people dislike cats.

"Do go away, Henrietta," said Mrs. Admiral. "You really are terribly in the way."

I rushed blindly into the Street, nearly colliding with Little Mrs. Simpkins in her bath-chair, who was bringing "Stray Thoughts for Girls" as her offering to pulp.

On the way home I decided to steal the Fieldings. It was quite simple. That night, while the nine o'clock news deadened the sound of my burglarious entrance, I walked into the Savernacks' house, saw the key of the depôt on the hall table, picked it up, and walked out again. Then I went to the depôt, lifted the Fieldings tenderly from their shelf, put five one-pound notes on the counter under a copy of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," returned the key to the Savernacks' hall table, and went home.

"More books ? " said Charles, looking up from *The Times*. "You 'll have to get another shelf put up soon."

Next morning, like a murderer unable to keep away from the scene of his crime, I took another book down to the Good Book depôt. The empty space on the shelf where the Fieldings had been yawned accusingly empty, but nobody seemed to have noticed it, and Mrs. Savernack accepted "Gone With the Wind" very graciously.

"People are wonderfully generous," said Mrs. Admiral. "Yesterday we had an anonymous gift of five pounds."

But that evening, just before dinner, while Charles was drinking his whisky-and-soda, Evensong flung open the door and the Police Sergeant and Mrs. Savernack walked into the room.

"Hullo, Sergeant," said Charles, who has professional dealings with the police, "what 's the trouble now ? "

The Sergeant scratched his chin and looked uncomfortable. "Well, Sir——" he said.

"It 's Henrietta," said Mrs. Savernack ; "she 's stolen some books."

"I wouldn't put it past her," said Charles cheerfully.

Mrs. Savernack walked across to the bookshelves. "There they are ! " she said dramatically, pointing at the Fieldings.

"I didn't steal them," I said. "I left five pounds."

"What damn-fool nonsense is this, Henrietta ? " said Charles.

"They were so beautiful," I said.

"It was my fault," said Mrs. Savernack, coming to my rescue in a big way. "I told her they were going to be pulped. Of course, they aren't really. I wanted to tease her. She 's so funny about books."

"Then I take it you don't want to bring a case ? " said the Sergeant.

"Certainly not," said Mrs. Savernack. "The whole thing was a misunderstanding."

The Sergeant then refused some beer, winked at me behind Mrs. Savernack's back, and left. Mrs. Savernack stayed behind to have a drink. She said nobody knew of my lapse—she couldn't call it anything worse than that—except Mrs. Admiral and herself, and they would be as silent as the grave. She said she was going to give my five pounds to the Red Cross as a judgment. Then she went away with the Fieldings.

When she had gone, Charles said, "You silly little thing ! I believe you were frightened."

I said, "Yes."

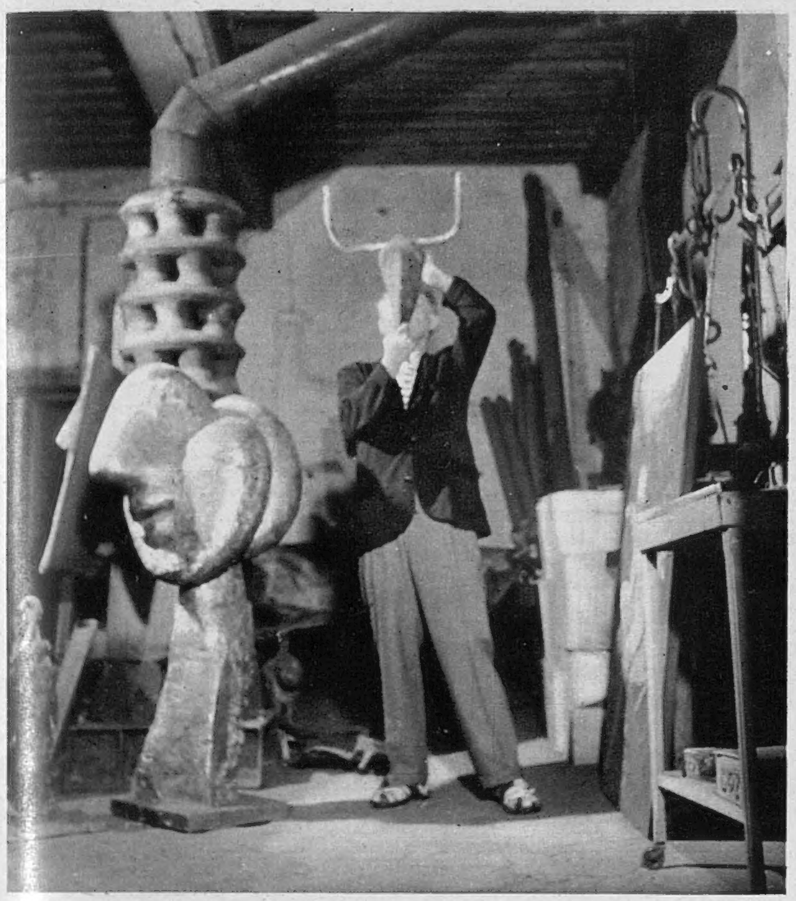
Always your affectionate Childhood's Friend,

HENRIETTA.

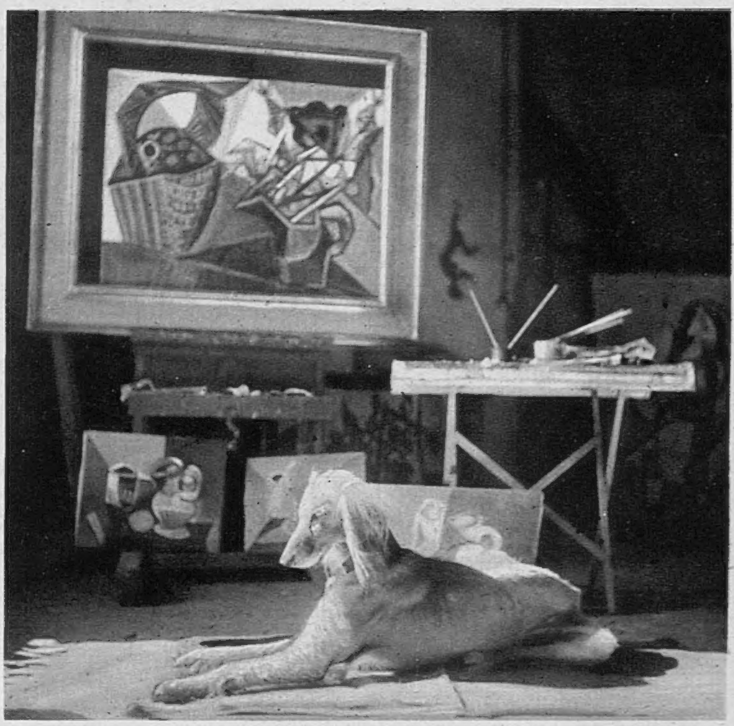
"It was quite simple."

"The Police Sergeant and Mrs. Savernack."

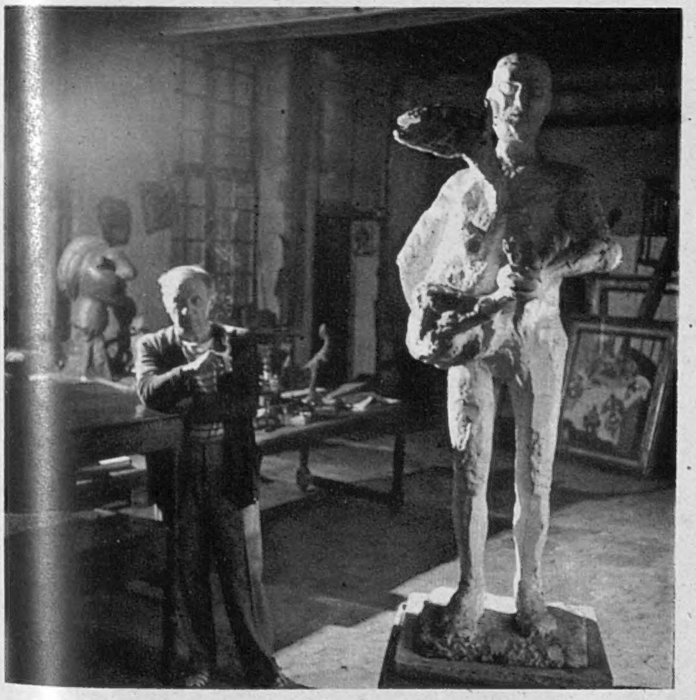
STILL IN PARIS, STILL MODERN: 63-YEAR-OLD PICASSO.



PABLO PICASSO, *born in 1881, and still going strong as a modernist painter and sculptor, creates a new form, with the help of a bicycle seat and handle-bars.*



KASBEK, *the artist's Afghan hound, enjoying a patch of sunshine on the studio floor. He is posed in front of some of Picasso's Cubist still-life groups.*



In the downstairs studio, where he works on his sculpture and keeps his collection of art curios. Picasso remained in Paris throughout the occupation.

PICASSO *embraces a favourite model—an amusing study of the leader of the Cubist movement, surrounded by examples of his work.*

PABLO PICASSO, the famous Spanish-French artist and initiator of Cubism, remained in Paris throughout the occupation, and defied the Germans by continuing to exhibit on the walls of his studio his painting of the destruction of Guernica by the German bombers during the Spanish civil war. He is sixty-three years of age, and is still a leading figure in modernist art. Indeed, so abstract were some of the eighty works which he is showing at the Salon d'Automne in Paris that they roused a few conventional visitors to make a demonstration against them! Picasso has exercised a paramount influence on modern painting and sculpture. He is also famous as a stage designer for Russian Ballet. His *décor* for Tricorne and Cuadro Flamenco will be specially remembered.

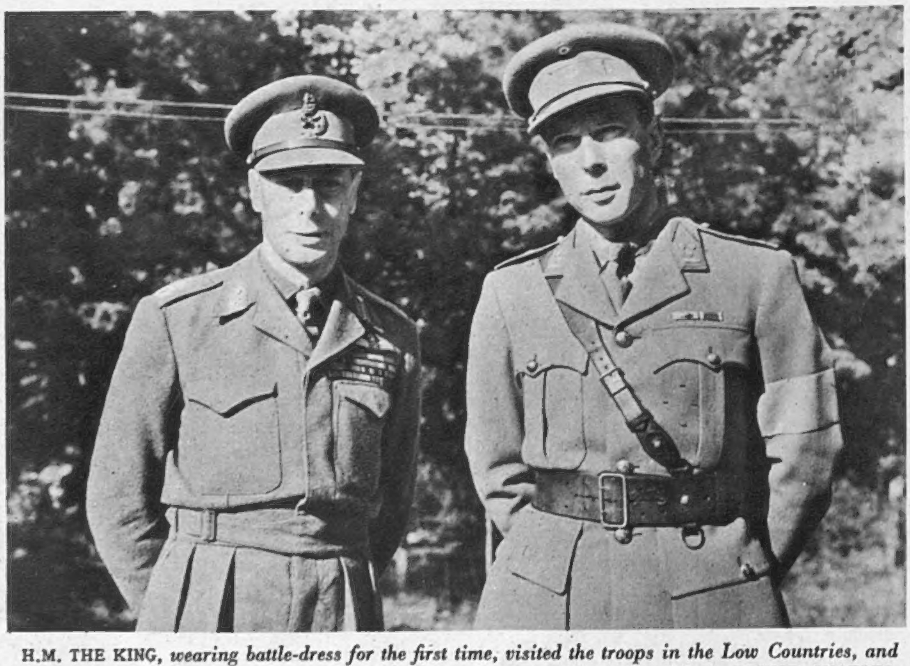
WEDDINGS, JOURNEYS AND ENTERTAINMENTS:

Right: MAJOR M. W. INGRAM, *Grenadier Guards, younger son of Sir Herbert and Lady Ingram, married* MISS AURIOL BLANCHE SMITH, *V.A.D., eldest daughter of Major-General Sir Arthur and the Hon. Lady Smith, at St. Michael's, Chester Square. The attendants were* MARION, JUDITH *and* HERBERT ROBIN INGRAM, *twin nieces and nephew of the bridegroom.*

Liberation ceremonies on the Dalmatian island of Vis: MARSHAL TITO *is standing on the right while a Yugoslav commander addresses his troops.*

Right: MRS. MARSIKA LANCASTER *is the only woman who knew the secret of the pre-fabricated harbours which enabled us to invade Normandy. For over a year she worked on scale cardboard models for the job. She is an artist, the wife of an officer.*

At Government House, Calcutta: MR. R. G. CASEY, *Governor of Bengal; Sir Hawthorne Lewis, Governor of Orissa; Capt. Clowes; Mr. Cecil Beaton, just returned from the Far East, taking M.O.I. photographs; Mr. Noel Coward; Capt. Carr; Mr. Hackforth; Mr. Davies; Capt. Carter; Mrs. Casey; Miss Jarrett; Lady Lewis; Capt. Porter (l. to r.).*



H.M. THE KING, *wearing battle-dress for the first time, visited the troops in the Low Countries, and held Investitures. Here he is seen with the* REGENT OF BELGIUM, H.R.H. PRINCE CHARLES, *with whom he lunched at Canadian Army H.Q.*

ENID STAMP-TAYLOR *was amused by the lively cut-out of a wound soldier outside the Donoughmore Club. She was judge and prize-giv at the show of work by Service men and women in Red Cross hospital*

HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE BY CAMERA.

Left : MAJOR *the* HON. J. J. ASTOR, *youngest son of Lord and Lady Astor, married* SEÑORITA ANA IÑEZ DE CARCANO, *younger daughter of the Argentine Ambassador, at St. James's, Spanish Place.*

"Marriage is a Private Affair" had its première at an Air Force station, and G.I.s lined up early for seats. LANA TURNER, *the star, was not present in person, but was represented by a life-like cut-out.*

Here's a happy party of G.I.s enjoying some relaxation somewhere in France. They are being entertained by the lovely MARLENE DIETRICH. *With her in the same group are* JOEY FAYE *(l.) and pianist* JERRY CUMMINGS.

Left : Welcome home! MRS. WINSTON CHURCHILL *greets the* PRIME MINISTER *at the airport on his arrival in this country after his talks in Moscow, and visits to Cairo and Italy.*

MRS. PAULA JOHNSON, *twenty-year-old wife of Wing-Commander "Johnny" Johnson, top-scoring fighter pilot, recently gave birth to a son.*

The marriage of Dr. Hassan Nachât Pasha, Egyptian Ambassador in London, to MISS PATRICIA MARY PRIEST *took place recently at the Egyptian Embassy. The bride has become a Moslem, and the ceremony was conducted by the Saudi Arabian Minister.*

CINEMA CAMEOS.

By C. A. LEJEUNE.

BETTER than any new film this week; better than any new film for weeks or months past, is the superb old "KERMESSE HEROÏQUE," which reappears for a short season at the Academy. If you have never seen it, hurry to repair the error. If you have already seen it, hurry to see it again. What a piece of work this is—subtle, impious and brilliant! I should not hesitate to place it amongst the six best pictures ever made.

Jacques Feyder, the director, is a Belgian by birth and temperament, and magnificently fitted to re-create this drama of the Flemish renaissance, in the days when Flanders was under the heel of Philip of Spain. The story tells of the unorthodox defence of the city of Boom against the Spanish invaders. The Burgomaster, a pompous little fraud, announces that he will give his life to save his town, but his resistance consists in pretending to be dead; lying on a candle-lit bier, and advising his fellow-burghers to go into hiding. It is the women, less passive and more realistic, who really save Boom. Under the leadership of the Burgomaster's wife, a heroic figure in deep widow's weeds, they go out to the city gates to welcome the invading troops. They feast and entertain them throughout a high carnival night. In the morning the invaders withdraw, with affectionate and enjoyable memories of the hospitality of Boom, and the timid husbands and sweethearts come unscathed from their cellars.

Feyder has gone to the paintings of Van Dyck, Breughel and Velasquez for his costumes and settings; and there is hardly a moment when the screen does not frame some composition of fine and significant content. The acting is superb. Françoise Rosay, who is Mme. Feyder in private life, has never done anything more striking than her portrait of the Burgomaster's wife. Amazonic, arms akimbo, rallying the women; regal, in her false mourning, greeting the Spanish commander; resourceful, as she urges her quaking husband into prominence again after the departure of the enemy, she dominates the picture. But Alerme is fine, too, as the Burgomaster; Jean Murat makes a large-hearted study of the Spanish commander; and Micheline Cheirel is charming as the Burgomaster's shy daughter. Probably the most deadly sketch of all comes from Louis Jouvet as an unctuous Dominican camp-follower—a brilliant piece of restrained satire, something small, calculated and malign.

One of the films that I shall contrive to forget as quickly as possible, for the friendship and esteem in which I hold the Americans, is "MARRIAGE IS A PRIVATE AFFAIR" (Empire)—or "Merrudge Is a Privut Affayurr," as the heroine, Miss Lana Turner, describes it. This is the first picture Miss Turner has made since her break for motherhood. It is only fair to say at once that motherhood becomes her. The lady looks radiant. She has never been more glamorous, worn smarter clothes, indulged in more diversified and fanciful hair-dos, nor taken a more luscious photograph, than in this film. She has also, in all probability, never been given sillier lines to speak, nor played a more tiresome, inept, shallow, trivial and nitwitted heroine.

Consider this young woman, who takes 116 minutes to discover that merrudge is a privut affayurr. Her name is Theo. She is described as "irresponsible and gay." She "spends the winter on the Riviera, and gives orders in French." (Thank heaven, we don't have to hear them!) She has been brought up by a selfish society mother, who seems to have left a trail of divorced husbands in every State in America. She is surrounded by beaux. She plays the piano in an Officers' Club: not professionally, you understand, but as part of her contribution to the war effort; just Beauty going slumming.

Tom, a tense young lootenant in the Army Air Corps (John Hodiak), leans across the ivories and murmurs, in effect, "I was born under a maple-tree in Vermont. Marry me." Between bars, she replies, in effect, "If the maple-tree is really a maple-tree, I'll marry you." Tom mails her a maple leaf. Theo marries him. At the altar, her naïve thoughts are recorded: "Am I right to marry him just because he sent me a maple leaf?"

Good gosh, no! She isn't right to marry anyone. She is, on the indisputable evidence of the synopsis, "irresponsible." "A honeymoon, hotels and lots of laughs," she admits, "that's my speed." Instead of that, she finds herself stuck with a six-roomed apartment, a model kitchen, a nanny and a baby, and a husband who says, "This thing you've got yourself into with me [merrudge], it's till everything freezes over."

Theo takes this wartime austerity hard. She goes out to night-clubs with former beaux. She arrives home after midnight on her son's first birthday, in time to snatch the baby out of a deep sleep, but just too late to celebrate his anniversary with champagne and candles. She does not appreciate that "that look in one man's eyes" should be enough for any honest woman. She pays an indiscreet call, in the small hours, on a brother-officer of her husband's; who is fortunately tactful enough to go no farther than switching on the radio, and murmuring, "Greenland! Brahms! And You!"

Disconcerted by the fiasco of a married friend of hers, who goes mad when her lover marries another girl and drives his car off a high bridge, Theo starts divorce proceedings. This is the high moment for the scenario-writers. They are ready, waiting to pounce. They have Theo suffer a change of heart. They have Tom out there, somewhere in the Pacific war zone. They fix up a telephonic communication. Through military channels (official, mind you, but human; so terribly, terribly human), the following conversation is transmitted:

"Tell him Tom Tom Darling I'm still married to you ever No Theo I mean you were married to a stuffed shirt and that's not me any longer Tom listen I said I wanted to stay married to you for good Tom Tom you don't understand Oh Theo it's fine."

It's fine. It's final. It's box-office. It's pitiful.

Another telephonic heart-cry to a flying-field turns up in a Russian film called "A SONG IN THE AIR" (Tatler). This time the heroine, naturally named Natasha, bathes the transmitter in tears, and—but wait; we must go back a little. This Natasha (Ludmila Tselikovskaya) is a singer at the Moscow Opera. She is beloved by two men, Ananie (Georgi Speigel), the Opera's star tenor, and Ivan (Mikhail Zherov), a transport pilot. Ananie, who is favoured by Natasha's mother, is No Good. You can see it at a glance. He is No Good at all. He has touched-up lips. His eyelashes are long. He wears a bow tie, and hysterical fans run after him in packs. When he sings a duet with Natasha on a balcony, he turns up his coat-collar to protect his throat from the night air. Ivan takes off *his* coat, and wraps it round Natasha to protect *her*. Ivan is middle-aged, unlovely, a bit of a stodge, but there is no doubt which of the two men she ought to marry.

THE BEST PLAYS.

*Starred by "The Sketch." ***=top-score.*

*** "BLITHE SPIRIT" *(Duchess).* Noel Coward's play. Penelope Ward, Joyce Carey, Nicholas Parker.

*** "PINK STRING AND SEALING WAX" *(Phœnix).* 1880 Brighton comedy. Iris Hoey, Dorothy Hyson, Malcolm Keen.

*** "UNCLE HARRY" *(Garrick).* Murder thriller, with Michael Redgrave and Beatrix Lehmann.

** OLD VIC THEATRE COMPANY *(New).* Laurence Olivier, Ralph Richardson, Sybil Thorndike, Nicholas Hannen in repertory.

** "ARSENIC AND OLD LACE" *(Strand).* Lilian Braithwaite, Mary Jerrold, Naunton Wayne, Frank Pettingell, Edmund Willard.

** "WHILE THE SUN SHINES" *(Globe).* Farce. Jane Baxter, Ronald Squire, Hugh McDermott.

** "SWEETER AND LOWER" *(Ambassadors).* Second edition of "Sweet and Low" revue: Hermione Gingold and Henry Kendall.

** "TO-MORROW THE WORLD" *(Aldwych).* Nazi youth. Robert Harris, Elizabeth Allan, Jean Cadell, David O'Brien.

** "THE BANBURY NOSE" *(Wyndham's).* Family history, with Roger Livesey, Ursula Jeans.

** SADLER'S WELLS BALLET SEASON *(Prince's).* Robert Helpmann, Margot Fonteyn. Constant Lambert and Alec Sherman conduct.

** JOHN GIELGUD in Repertory *(Haymarket).* Yvonne Arnaud, Peggy Ashcroft, Leslie Banks, Leon Quartermaine.

** "THE LISBON STORY" *(Stoll).* Play with music.

** "SOMETHING IN THE AIR" *(Palace).* Jack Hulbert, Cicely Courtneidge.

** "HAPPY AND GLORIOUS" *(Palladium).* Revue with Tommy Trinder, Zoë Gail, Elisabeth Welch.

* "IT DEPENDS WHAT YOU MEAN" *(Westminster).* Bridie's latest. Alastair Sim; Angela Baddeley.

* "MEET ME VICTORIA" *(Victoria Palace).* Cockney humour with Lupino Lane.

* "NO MEDALS" *(Vaudeville).* Wartime housewife. Fay Compton.

* "THREE'S A FAMILY" *(Saville).* Comedy. With Vera Pearce.

* "IS YOUR HONEYMOON REALLY NECESSARY?" *(Duke of York's).* Ralph Lynn, Enid Stamp Taylor.

* "THE LILAC DOMINO" *(His Majesty's).* Revived, with Pat Taylor, Leo Franklyn, Bernard Clifton, Elizabeth French.

* "BIRD IN HAND" *(St. Martin's).* Drinkwater comedy. Herbert Lomas.

* "THIS WAS A WOMAN" *(Comedy).* Sonia Dresdel, John Bryning, Nova Pilbeam in effective melodrama.

* "THE MERRY WIDOW" *(Coliseum).* Cyril Ritchard, Madge Elliott.

* "THE LAST OF MRS. CHEYNEY" *(Savoy).* Jack Buchanan, Coral Browne, Athene Seyler, Austen Trevor, Margaret Scudamore.

N.B.—While we shall always do our best to keep this list up to date, we cannot hold ourselves responsible for any errors which may occur. Consult your daily paper; ring up the theatre to avoid disappointment.

" A Song in the Air " is nothing if not conventional, so, in the correct traditions of the cinema, Natasha and Ivan presently fall out. This sad event takes place round about Reel Three, just as the Germans are invading Russia in June 1941. Ivan is ordered to the front, to evacuate Red Army wounded in his transport 'plane. Natasha, broken-hearted, repairs to the Opera to make her début in Tchaikowsky's " Queen of Spades." A bouquet, supposedly from Ananie, lies on her dressing-table. She spurns it. She fingers it coldly—and ah! what does she see? She sees—don't laugh; this is a high emotional moment—she sees, amongst the roses and smilax or what-have-you, Ivan's Teddy bear. She rushes to the telephone and sends that electric message to the airfield: " Tell him I love him very—very—very much."

Meanwhile, Ivan, attacked by Junkers, is flying blindly in a fog. How to find Moscow is his problem.

" Fiddlers Three " (New Gallery), Ealing Studios production with a stage-star cast, is a light-hearted musical on the adventures of two tars and a Wren in ancient Rome. Empress Poppæa (FRANCES DAY) *took a fancy to Tommy the sailor* (TOMMY TRINDER), *invited him to share her milk-bath. It meant love; he loved the Wren; so he hesitated.*

Paramount's rendering of Preston Sturges' comedy " Hail the Conquering Hero " (Plaza) stars EDDIE BRACKEN *as Woodrow Truesmith, who conceals his discharge from the U.S. Marine Corps, adds ribbons to his tunic, and is given a civic welcome at his hometown. The Sergeant* (WILLIAM DEMAREST) *has ugly suspicions.*

But you, who have seen films before, will appreciate that it is really no problem at all. He merely has to turn the knobs of his radio until he hears Natasha singing " The Queen of Spades." Keeping the course on that wave-length, guided by that guardian voice (" A Song in the Air "—see ?), he brings the wounded home safely.

Both Tselikovskaya and Speigel have rich, generous voices of operatic calibre, and use them well. Personally, I prefer the Russian musical films when they are lighter in texture—gay things with camera tricks, like " Volga Volga " and " The Bright Path."

That sort of Soviet musical seems to have a future. It is young and fresh, and belongs properly to the screen. *This* sort seems rather a relic of the old theatre world, the age of the potted palm and aspidistra.

Now that ghosts, who used to be considered a comic stand-by in pictures, are all the vogue for serious patrons, a third version of " Outward Bound " has appeared, under the title of " BETWEEN TWO WORLDS " (Warners). The original " Outward Bound," you 'll remember, began with a group of passengers aboard an ocean liner. Little by little, it became apparent that there was something odd about all of them, and about the wise old steward who served them, and about the ship, too, for that matter. Gradually—only very gradually, for the idea was new and daring in those days—the audience realised with a delightful shiver that these people were all dead, bound on a ghost ship for the port of eternity.

Well, that dawning revelation and the atmosphere it conjured up has kept " Outward Bound " going, as a working theatre piece for professionals and amateurs, for twenty years or thereabouts. It had good dramatic sense. I can see no reason in the world, except a perverse yearning for topicality, why the producers of " Between Two Worlds " should have thought it beneficial to change it. In the new film the audience is let into the secret with the opening sequence. Eight characters of assorted type are leaving England for America in wartime. On the way to the ship, their bus is blown up by a bomb. Simultaneously, not in the bus, but elsewhere, a world-weary concert artist and his wife commit suicide, because he is not allowed to leave England and she doesn't care to live without him. It is clear to every fathead in the audience that all these people are as dead as mutton. (Actually, the suicides make a botch of it, and aren't, but they clearly ought to be.) The result is a notable lack of suspense when we meet the crowd again on shipboard. Knowing what we do know about bombs and motion pictures, the reaction of these people to their situation seems markedly slow.

Still, " Outward Bound " had too much good sense for " Between Two Worlds " to be entirely without any. This story of bewildered people, wondering what 's up with them, and what is going to happen to them at journey's end, is more satisfactory than most films about, say, band leaders. Some of the acting is highly competent, particularly Edmund Gwenn's as the helpful steward, and Sydney Greenstreet's as the Reverend Frank Thompson. This odd personage, you 'll remember, is the mysterious " Examiner," who boards the ship from the home port of Eternity to run over each passenger's moral equipment, and decide what should happen to him or her on landing. Mr. Greenstreet, in one of the stickiest rôles ever allotted to an actor, gives a very nice sketch of a heavenly official; well-nourished, apt to be absent-minded, benign, but with lots of good hard sense and authority.

M.-G.-M.'s " Marriage is a Private Affair " (Empire) stars LANA TURNER *as Theodora, who marries Lieut. Tom West* (JOHN HODIAK) *lightly, becomes involved in an affair with another man, but eventually finds her husband is her man after all. The film is reviewed on the facing page.*

The most mysterious character is that played by John Garfield; a newspaper person, whom, I suppose, we should call the hero. This fellow, unaccountably peeved about something, although it 's a little hard to tell what, is liable to break into every conversation with a strange, cynical and esoteric jargon. As far as I can remember, this journalist, this Tom Prior, as played by Leslie Howard and Leslie Faber, and all the other actors who previously essayed him, was a human, credible sort of person, who never let his streak of whimsy run away with him. The present Tom Prior may be a riot to his producers, but to me he is just John Garfield with the chip on his shoulder, acting mysterious and talking too much.

The première of the Technicolor film " The Climax," in aid of the Y.M.C.A., is due at the Odeon, Leicester Square, on November 3. Starred is BORIS KARLOFF *as Dr. Hohner, opera-house doctor who has strangled prima donna Marcellina, who hated him. Angela* (SUSANNA FOSTER) *has a voice like the star's; is to sing the same opera. Hohner uses his hypnotic power to prevent her, and that failing, he begins to strangle her too, when he is discovered.*

FAY COMPTON—HOME FRONT HEROINE OF "NO MEDALS."

"Go on—what's the verdict?" Captain G. Radcliffe, R.N. (FREDERICK LEISTER), *asked to adjudicate on the cooking by* Lolly (PAULINE TENNANT), *Nigel* (RONALD FORTT), *Paul* (MICHAEL McNEILE), *Helen* (VALERIE WHITE) *and Roddy* (JOHN WITTY; *l. to r.*).

"Quick! Quick! The fishmonger's got fish!" Mrs. Maling (ROBIN COLES) *comes dashing in to bring glad food news to Mrs. Dacre* (FAY COMPTON), *harassed fellow-housewife.*

"You have a nerve, standing there firing questions at me like a schoolmaster." Lolly Dacre (PAULINE TENNANT) *and Flight-Lieut. Roddy Macintyre, R.A.F.* (JOHN WITTY).

"You would find that a good deal easier if you took it off." "There isn't time; besides, I think I've sewn it to my foot already." Martha Dacre and her daughter Lolly.

Martha Dacre (FAY COMPTON), *the overworked and unselfish mother of a family, with her daughters, Lolly* (PAULINE TENNANT) *and Helen Wyland* (VALERIE WHITE).

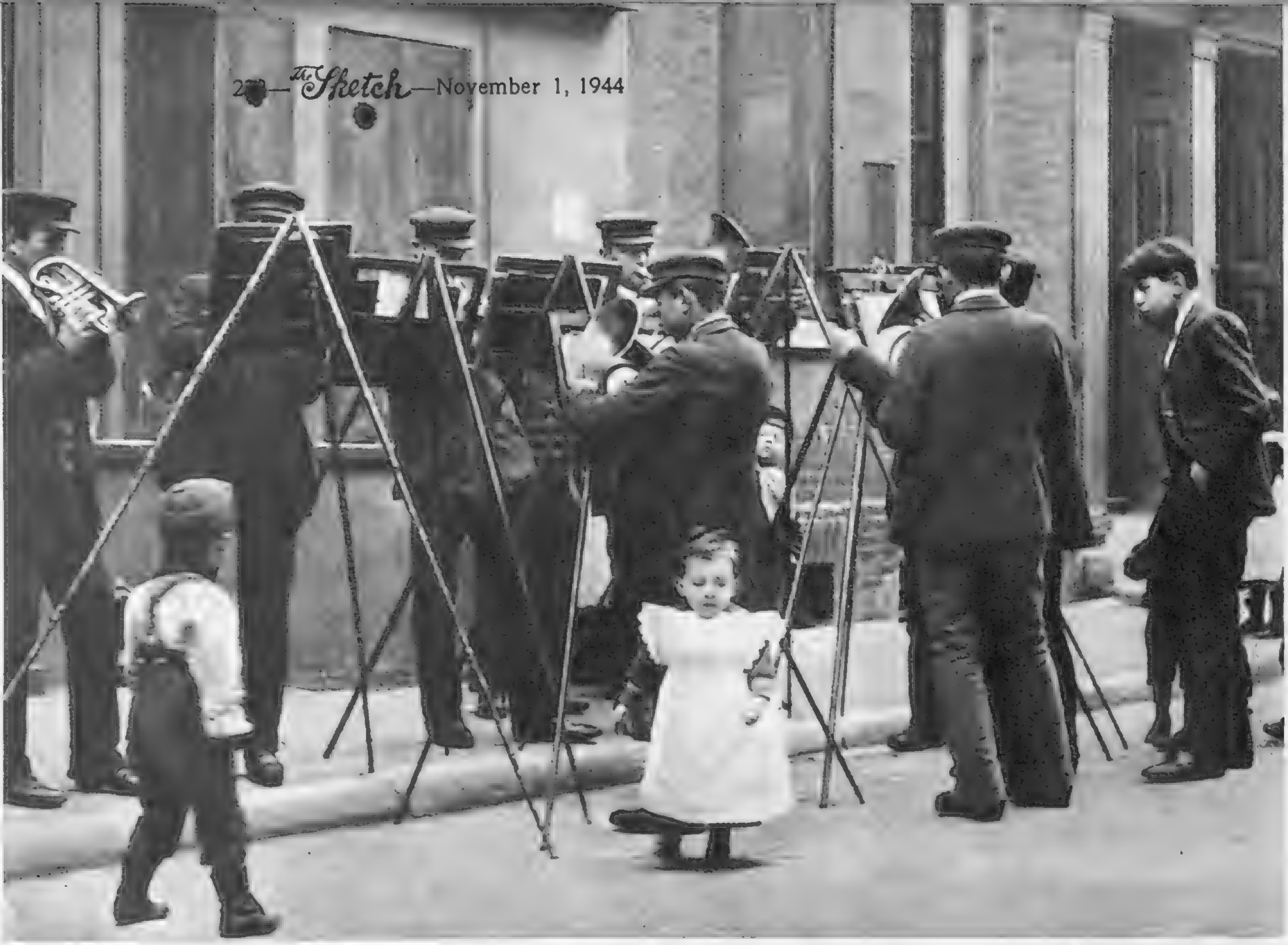
"I hope Geoffrey's char turns up—at least for the interview." Lolly and Helen.

"NO MEDALS," new Esther McCracken domestic comedy at the Vaudeville, has Miss Fay Compton to head the cast as Martha Dacre, one of Britain's gallant unsung heroines, an upper-middle-class housewife, just too old for the call-up. She stands in queues to get food for the family, fire-watches, does domestic chores and takes on a hundred "stooge jobs" without a word of complaint. The play presents her daily round, and the love-affairs and war activities of her daughters and their friends in the simple, apparently effortless manner which is the secret of Esther McCracken's popularity as playwright.

"Guess what I've got in here. Three enormous onions from that adorable fat man with the allotment . . ." Roddy, Martha and Lolly (l. to r.).

HEAD OF AMERICA'S G-MEN—
J. EDGAR HOOVER.

Tough, and looks it, is MR. J. EDGAR HOOVER, *Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation of America, the most efficient anti-crime organisation in the world. This stockily-built chief has a sensational record for bringing public enemies of all kinds, including the notorious kidnapping gangs, to justice. The prevention of sabotage and espionage have since the war become major tasks of the F.B.I., and as a result of the exploits of his men, Mr. Hoover is a hero of all American schoolboys. Born in Washington, D.C., before the turn of the century, Mr. Hoover grew up in the U.S. capital, graduating as Valedic Torian (one of the tops of his class) at his High School. On leaving he became a messenger in the Congressional Library, and studied law in the evenings at the George Washington University. He holds two law degrees, and practised law before he joined the U.S. Department of Justice. In 1919 he was special Assistant to the U.S. Attorney-General; in 1921 Assistant Director to the F.B.I., and its Director in 1924. Besides many articles in newspapers and magazines, he has written a book, "Persons in Hiding." Mr. Hoover has a pleasant personality; is a bachelor; fond of sports: and collects Chinese antiques.* [AN EXCLUSIVE PORTRAIT BY Y. KARSH, OF OTTAWA.]



With music-stands set up on the edge of the pavement: a GERMAN BAND *settles down to give a street concert in a world unblessed by the B.B.C.*

Taking a HANSOM *outside the Law Courts: two men in conventional toppers and morning coats leap into the fastest type of conveyance then on the London streets.*

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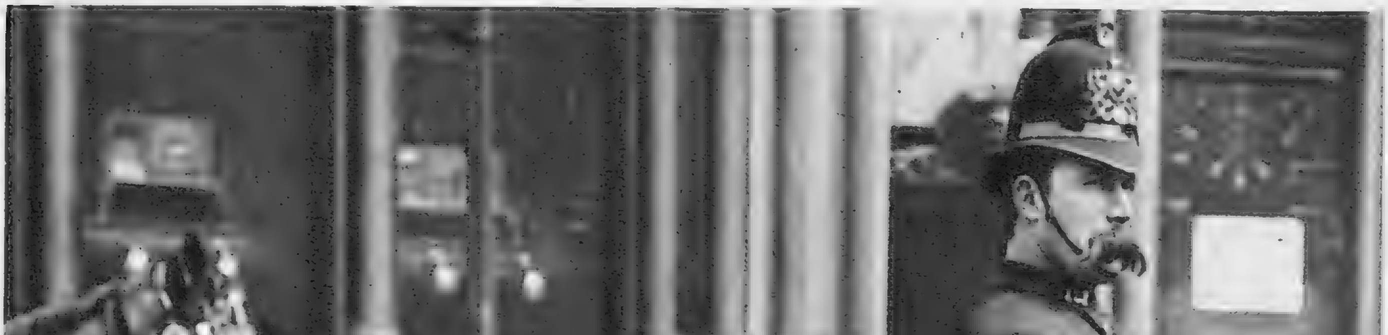
The HORSE BUS, *driven by a coachman in a smart sporting get-up, stock tie, a bowler hat and yellow gloves. "The Dairymaids," advertised on the vehicle, was produced at the Apollo in 1906.*



Controlling the traffic—all horse-drawn and not always notably impatient or rapid: a LONDON BOBBY, *wearing a fine example of the then-popular walrus moustache.*

HIGH-DE-HIGH AND HIGHER: PARIS HATS AND HAIR.

Liberation fashions in Paris may well make you gasp—and they're meant to, for Paris has set out to show the world that she can make models out of nothing, and that soaring extravagance can be achieved with bits and pieces, and, in fact, out of whatever the milliner can lay her hands on in a time of general shortage. Height, and yet more height, is the rule for hats and hair in the liberated city, and the most startling models have been built up in turban styles, some of which suggest the high-hat head-dress of the famous bust of Egyptian Nefertiti; in tiered edifices which recall the eighteenth-century coiffures which so shocked Maria Theresa when her daughter, Marie Antoinette, launched them; and in swathed effects which have an affinity with the Victorian tea-cosy, if none of its frowstiness! Hair, too, has gone up, higher than in London.

PARISIENNE *goes shopping in a two-piece printed silk bonnet turban, with scarf wound round to keep it in place.*

Light brown calf, sewn up in front of toe.

Mahogany-red spectator sport shoe.

Black felt, with thick wooden soles.

Caramel reversed calf, trimmed white and tan goat-fur.

Wedges in garnet-red kid.

Red velvet bedroom slippers, cork-soled.

AND THE PARIS SHOES.

PARIS may be high-hat, but her feet in very high heels are firmly planted on the pavement. With Gallic common sense, now that the Boches are out of it, the shoe-makers have begun to set their house in order, and the shoes on this page show wartime *chic* which is tonic. Leather, of course, is, in the classic phrase, " in short supply," so to the production of these shoes have gone much imagination and ingenuity, plus the use of all sorts of materials. Cork soles for the red velvet slippers ; goat-fur for the caramel reversed calf, and so on.

WE TAKE OFF

BELITA, for being an almost "triphibian"

In her classic tutu BELITA *limbers up on the brink of the pool.*

Holding her breath she submerges, gracefully sinking to the floor of the pool, still smiling.

TO crib the word the Premier coined for Lord Louis Mountbatten's activities, BELITA, the celebrated ballerina, skater, and swimmer, is almost "triphibian." She dances under water, on the ice, and her stage leaps might be called "in air." She made an under-water "ballet" for Paramount News, from which we draw "shots" to show how none of her grace and agility are lost even against water-pressure. Belita, who is an English girl (Belita Jepson-Turner), started her skating career in 1937, when

[*Continued opposite.*

The water shimmers like champagne in the sunlight as the dancer leaps.

Over the rock she vaults against heavy water-pressure, as lightly as a cloud.

OUR HAT TO—

lancer, under water, on ice, and in air.

Her frilly ballet costume weighs 40 lb. when wet; it would impede some swimmers, but not this star.

Lightly poised on a rock under water, she makes a dramatic gesture.

Continued.]

she competed for the British Women's Figure Skating Championship at Westminster Ice Club, coming in fourth. Later that year she played leading lady in "Rhapsody on Ice," at Covent Garden; in Paris she starred in an ice ballet at the Mogador Theatre; in New York in two skating revues with Sonja Henie and Megan Taylor, and in 1938 she went off to Hollywood, a "pro.," to give exhibitions. With her diving champion partner, James Caesar, she has given many under-water exhibition dances.

The intricate under-water dance completed, Belita executes a most elegant curtsy—

—And ascends to the surface in a shower of tiny bubbles.

MEET THE ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY—

Backstage (l. to r.): WREN ALICE NELSON, of Montreal, cousin to the famous Canadian ace pilot, "Screwball" Beurling; WREN BARBARA DAVIS, of Newmarket, Ontario; and WREN DOBSON, the wardrobe mistress.

Seven pretty Canadian Wrens come out of a huddle during one of their precision-dance scenes.

FOR spectacular speed, wit and rhythm, the Royal Canadian Navy's musical revue "Meet the Navy" is so near-professional as to have excited an American chief to send the cast to perform to the

Attractive in rehearsal garb: WRENS JANET THOMPSON, GWEN TASSE, solo dancer in "Scena Russka"; and REA SMITH.

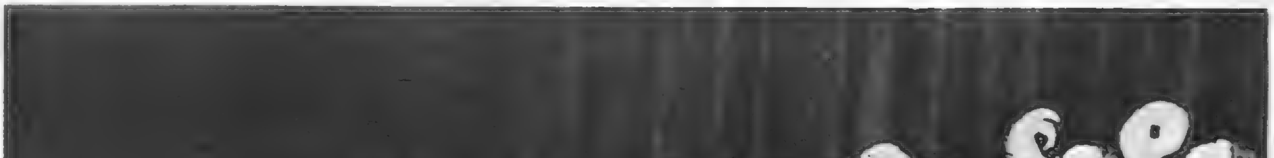
C.P.O. ALAN and WREN P.O. BLANCHE LUND are the pros. of the show. Very fine dancers, they are married, and teamed together for five years as Lee and Sandra.

—IN THEIR MUSICAL REVUE "MEET THE NAVY."

WREN MARGARET HURST, *a chorus-girl of the "Colour Confusion" turn, talks to a member of the Balalaika Orchestra.*

Right: LIEUT. CAMERON GRANT, R.C.N.V.R., *plays Captain Bligh in a special version of "Mutiny on the Bounty." He is going to Hollywood after the war, and carries M.-G.-M.'s contract in his pocket.*

men in Labrador. Now, following a most successful tour of Canada and Newfoundland, the revue has made its United Kingdom *début* at Glasgow's Empire Theatre; and after a week in Edinburgh it is billed up to January at Service camps, and theatres in England, all proceeds to go to King George's Fund for Sailors. In collaboration with E.N.S.A., it is expected to move to France in January before coming to London for a February engagement. The production is under the supervision of Captain J. P. Connolly, M.C., R.C.N.V.R., Director of Special Services, under the patronage of the High Commissioner for Canada and Mrs. Massey and Vice-Admiral Nelles, R.C.N. The cast totals 115, is graced by thirty-five lovely Canadian Wrens, and includes a Balalaika orchestra.



"I'd Rather Be a Rockette Than a Wren." THE ROCKETTES *vie with the famous professional team, the Rockettes of New York's Radio City Music Hall, in their fast precision dancing as well as in their looks and their elegant legs.*

THE LITERARY LOUNGER.

By L. P. HARTLEY.

MISS STELLA GIBBONS' new novel should rather be called "The Bachelors," for Kenneth Fielding is only one of three marked down for eventual marriage. Hen-pecked by his sister Constance, who runs and rules his house, diffident from the effect of a jilting long years ago, he has reached the age of forty-eight when Vartouhi, a refugee from a small imaginary Balkan country, joins the household. Vartouhi's function is to help his sister and his cousin with the housework; but she also brings a breath of free Bairamian air into the stuffy atmosphere of "Sunglades," and (with another woman, Kenneth's old flame, to help her) saves them all from the deadening effect of "Habit and Comfort and Humorous Self-deprecation."

A Refugee, and Others. Vartouhi is very well drawn, and never more effectively than in the scene where she reviles the Italian prisoners. A single-minded, bloodthirsty, mercenary, beguiling little baggage with a loving heart, she is contrasted throughout with Constance, an iron-willed internationalist and pacifist, irritatingly indulgent to those with "younger souls" than her own, and possessed by a power-complex. Kenneth is rich, good-natured and ineffective, wrapped up in the Home Guard and in his memories of the Other War. Three minor characters are Richard the Communist, at whom Vartouhi first sets her cap; Alicia, a *désabusée* "modern" girl working in a munitions factory; and the Fieldings' cousin, Miss Burton, a somewhat sentimental old maid with a youthful heart. Nor must we forget Mr. Fielding senior, the Night-Club King, to his daughter Constance a rather dreadful old man; or Betty, Richard's mother, a woman with so many graces and virtues that the author does not allow us to see much of her; or Gustav Stocke, a booming bore, but dear to Constance.

Plot and Treatment. A climax comes when Richard leaves "Sunglades" to avoid Vartouhi's torturing proximity; another when Constance, horrified with Vartouhi's present to Kenneth, turns her out of the house; a third when Vartouhi returns. There are other episodes, of course, but on the whole "The Bachelor" is a little lacking in action for such a long book. It stands by its humour, its characterisation, and by the author's shrewd and penetrating appraisal of many tendencies in wartime England. Although her inclination towards fantasy sometimes peeps out, especially in her descriptions of Bairamia, on the whole this is as realistic a novel as Miss Gibbons cares to write. It is a comedy of which she has taken the treatment more seriously than she has the plot; the latter is almost too symmetrical, and the wires by which it is pulled in place are frequently visible. But the treatment is lively down to the smallest detail—indeed, often most lively in the smallest details. The shocks are not so numerous as some of Miss Gibbons' admirers will wish; but every now and then, especially when Vartouhi is speaking, or acting, we feel the authentic electric tingle. Vartouhi's English, "too also," is an unfailing joy. Miss Gibbons does not quite maintain the impartiality with which she started out; her prejudice against Constance, and in favour of Vartouhi, grows on her, but we cannot grudge her the exercise of her malice, for in it is often manifest her own particular quality which distinguishes her from other clever women writers of the day. How brilliant are some of her inventions—one will never forget Constance's allegorical play, "Little Frimdl and the Peace Reindeer." She gives us a great deal to ponder over and more fun than one has a right to expect from a fairly realistic presentation of the contemporary scene.

Our brilliant literary critic, MR. L. P. HARTLEY, has just published a new book, "The Shrimp and the Anemone." About, though not for, children, it is a sensitive and subtle story of a small boy in the early part of the century.

An Original Story. "The Heart Consumed" is an original novel in many ways—in construction, development and point of view. The hero, Robert Devenish, dies as the result of an accident at the end of the fourth chapter, and throughout the remainder of the story he is present only at intervals, and then as a questing ghost. The action leaps over 200 years, from the middle of the last century to the middle of the next; at the end of it, Robert's ghost-hood is terminated. In the meantime, we witness what seems a rather arbitrary series of events arising out of the rivalry of two men, builders and planners on a large scale, and out of the love of the successful one, Dr. Bellamus, for the girl Amalia. These events are often sensational, but their logic is difficult to follow, and the blend of realism and fantasy with which they are described, and the indignant irony with which most of the characters regard each other's actions, make their allegorical meaning more than ever elusive. Perhaps there is none? Perhaps this dream-world, where the appearances are so vivid and the reality so obscure, is Mr. Askham's vision of the future. It is a future in which the nerves of the heart feel little and the nerves of the mind a great deal, in which sensation has superseded emotion, and in which desire itself does not spring out of a continuous current of personality, but from an intermittent intellectual itch. Dr. Bellamus has no real belief in his experiment for raising a ruling caste in his school of hand-picked youngsters at Merewen; it is simply something to occupy him and keep his name before the public.

The Contrast. One is all the more aware of this no doubt intentional emotional aridity because it follows the almost Chopinesque richness and poignancy of emotion of the earlier chapters. Here the tide of human feeling runs with almost unbearable strength; the Victorian background is marvellously conveyed; the last drop of bitterness is squeezed from passion and sorrow. To have kept the story going at such a pitch of intensity might have been difficult, and obviously would not have suited Mr. Askham's scheme; but to me it was a disappointment that he abandoned it for Dr. Bellamus, that handsome worldling, his blue-prints and his gangster-like amorousness. It may be that a hundred years hence the heart will be consumed and become a handful of dust for the mind to make mud-pies of; but it seems a pity that Mr. Askham should portray it thus, when he knows so well how to present it red and throbbing.

Work and Play at an Air Station. "Pastoral" belies its name, for it is really the story of an aerodrome, and more particularly of Peter Marshall, pilot of Bomber Command, who falls in love with Gervase Robertson, a W.A.A.F. officer upon his station. We hear a good deal about his work in the air, which includes two breath-taking operations over Germany; and about Gervase, the young lady whose powers of love-resistance are so disastrous to him, and through him, to his crew. And besides this, we have really fascinating glimpses of daily life at the air-station, during operations and between. It is to some extent the life of a caste apart, with its own conventions and its own language; mainly a man's world, but not exclusively, for both officially and unofficially the personnel of the W.A.A.F. impinges continually on the men's existence; and questions of discipline between the two have to be adjusted with the utmost delicacy.

Men and women alike they are subject to war strain; they are "browned off"; and the men find much relief in fishing. This peaceful pastime not only gives Mr. Nevil Shute his title, but also some pleasant pictures of the Oxfordshire landscape; incidentally, it yields the episode with the old lady at the park, which shows the author's gift for understatement at its most effective. The attitude of fighting men to the dangers of their calling is one which the civilian cannot easily understand, so specialised is it; but it comes out clearly here—and the only occasion when it does not quite carry conviction is the recitation (so to speak) which Marshall gives from the skies just before his crash-landing. Probability looks askance on this incident, though dramatic tension justifies it artistically.

Mr. Shute is to be congratulated on the way he lets two small breaches of discipline interrupt the full flood of happiness at the close; he is a writer who well understands how vital love is to those concerned, how indifferent, often, to onlookers.

Dangers of Collecting. It is said that collecting for charity is destructive to a sense of humour, and if persistently indulged in may be harmful to the character generally. But the dangers attendant on such an occupation are moral rather than physical. No doubt many collectees may have been tempted to break the sixth commandment; few can have been roused to the point of doing so. There is something well calculated to make the flesh creep in Mrs. Burge's conventional progress from house to house; her blindfold advance on her fate is unnerving; but more unnerving still is the descent of the guilty to Avernus, from fraud to greater and still greater crimes.

Mr. Burton handles his pen with ease and skill, which is more than can be said of Inspector Arnold's handling of his facts. The Inspector is too prone to take a tentative theory and give it the status of a solution, and even Merrion sometimes enunciates as established facts what are, in reality, deductions unsupported by evidence. Let us hope that "The Three Corpse Trick" will soon have a successor which is free from these blemishes.

BOOKS REVIEWED.

The Bachelor. By Stella Gibbons. (*Longmans*; 10s. 6d.)

The Heart Consumed. By Francis Askham. (*The Bodley Head*; 8s. 6d.)

Pastoral. By Nevil Shute. (*Heinemann*; 8s. 6d.)

The Three Corpse Trick. By Miles Burton. (*Collins*; 8s. 6d.)

Pin-up Girl:
No. 12. Mary Martin.

MARY MARTIN, *singing star of the screen and stage, planned to be a dancer before she ever thought of becoming a vocalist. She's red-headed, would like to be a blonde and photographs brunette. She made the song "My Heart Belongs to Daddy" famous all over the world; and is one of the top-notchers among Paramount stars, but had to go the long way round to win success, as it did not drop into her lap. Her screen hits include "Happy Go Lucky," Technicolor musicale; "True to Life," and so forth.*

THE VISITOR COMES FIRST.*

By WARDEN LEDGE.

WITHERSPOON'S parachute had landed him on a lower slope of Etna, with a leg already shattered in mid-air. Later, amputation followed. "Invalided out," he had taken up his interrupted appointment as third cathedral verger. Dean and Chapter had kept their promise.

Witherspoon now used a stick whenever he showed visitors round or moved in procession with his verge, for his brain had not wholly synchronised with the still unaccustomed mechanism of an artificial limb. Two violent metamorphoses—cathedral to very active service, and back to cathedral—in robbing Witherspoon of suavity, had also balanced and reformed: a psychologist would understand, cathedral ladies probably not.

Soft speech had, of course, been mere professional cover. It had hidden the real Witherspoon. Beneath lay an inflexible thoroughness in whatever he did.

As a verger, Witherspoon possessed other and more secular gifts; he could conscientiously be called a free-lance public entertainer—an art he had turned to no small personal advantage. In addition to being a clever conjurer and a bit of a pianist with a passable voice, he really was a first-class ventriloquist, combining a turn for mimicry that could only be used with prudence. In short, as vergers go, he was a man of parts, now fortified by war, deliberate as ever, but with a quickened, rather ruthless manner at which the second verger smiled, himself an old soldier and efficient Home Guard, though the dean's verger—"the head"—shook his beautiful white hair with sorrowful disapprovals: "Witherspoon," he had more than once said, "you *must* be a little less abrupt; remember, the visitor comes first—you, too, are now a civilian."

Yes, he was only a civilian again, on an unexciting, but, to him, intensely absorbing job. He must really try to conform by sacrificing his newly-acquired habit of quick decision to the more sedate procedure of the Church, who, though indulgent to a warrior, has her own way of rebuke. So he betook himself to his verging with all his old seriousness: what lay behind him, lay behind.

During winter months the cathedral closed at 4 p.m., and one verger was considered sufficient to clear and lock up. That January evening Witherspoon was "duty man." On conclusion of sung evensong, the other men handed in their keys and departed; Witherspoon then began his itinerary of "clearing," an operation of system: a visitor locked in means bad staff-work.

So, working east to west, he passed rapidly through the Lady Chapel, locking its north and south grilles; next, the choir, satisfying himself no one was examining the priceless *misericordes* within the gloomy oaken stalls. The transepts yielded one solitary individual, whom Witherspoon politely requested to leave; and so, locking side-doors as he went, he worked down the nave and aisles and ushered the solitary individual through the western exit. Witherspoon turned his final lock and was alone in the huge building.

He had now to go to the "head's" vestry in the south transept and collect the deposited keys. Tapping his way down a nave aisle, he looked up at a particular corbel, one in an equally-spaced row each side of the nave and at triforium height.

They were large stone human faces, the few clear-cut strokes—distance-compensators—enfeaturing marvellously. From the pate of each sprang a vaulting-rib. "What craftsmanship!" Witherspoon often said: the "grotesques" within the sanctuary a warning against Prelatal Pride; the gargoyles of Evil, escaping, yet held in bondage as water-ejecting scavengers.

But here, above the nave—the "ship"—these corbels, faithfully reflecting the pious, the drunkard, the lecher, good fellow and merry-maker, laughed with or warned the Common People, the little folk 70 ft. below.

The one attracting Witherspoon was obviously that of a soldier, judging by the merry, full-lipped mouth and large moustache. It reminded him strongly of his pal Timson, A.—one of two brothers in Witherspoon's late "crush." The face was always hailing him to "Chuck us up a fag, Withy!"

This evening, due to the darkening, "old Timmy," as Witherspoon affectionately named the corbel, appeared less jocose. Witherspoon stopped and shifted his position to study what was left of the play of light upon this 600-year-old visage. From this point of view it reminded him of other faces all basically "Timmy's," from that—— why, it stood for a perfectly splendid . . .

"I have you covered. Stand quite still!" a low, clear-cut voice commanded.

Witherspoon froze. Gone instantly were his present surroundings, his now-self vanishing with them. Then, as mental processes re-circulated, he was no longer verger, but a reborn, quick-thinking paratrooper.

The voice continued: "I have been observing your disability: we will therefore dispense with that fly-blown ritual of raising the hands. *I* need co-operation and *you* need your stick. Now turn round. Slowly. That's right."

Pivoting on his stick, Witherspoon rocked round. Confronting him was a man smaller by a head and dressed in clerical clothes. "That might have helped," Witherspoon ruefully thought—he had been well trained in unarmed combat—but the muzzle of the deadly Luger and the possession of only one sound leg more than cancelled out the advantage of height.

Sight of the pistol bridged the subconscious. The old fighting confidence took cool and complete possession. Here was a situation most worthy. Witherspoon felt a curious elation; it was as if his 'chute had drifted from the main bunch to land him in the presence of a single enemy, and since that enemy had not instantly greeted him with a "burst," he knew he had won the first round.

"What do you want?" Witherspoon asked, with just the right touch of meekness. "And you a clergyman, pointing a gun!"

"That rather remains to be seen," replied the little, dark, clean-shaven man. The enemy continued talking, but into those tense seconds and into Witherspoon's brain the stony face of Timson, A., intruded, now mobile and laughing, mouthing, it seemed, old Sandcroft's everlasting phrase, "The visitor comes first," and then, "Go on, Withy, *try it*!"

With that came the big idea.

"Do listen!" said the little fellow. "I want your keys. I am sure we can arrange things amicably without reverting to that appalling Hollywood 'gunmanese.'"

"Varsity!" Witherspoon decided. "I must keep him at it," and added, with assumed sheepishness, "My keys? Whatever for?"

"Obviously, you black-gowned ass, to obtain things which at present I have not. Also, to lock you in while I make my escape. If you like, I will leave you trussed, and you can tell the deliverers what yarn you like. I shall be far away—nobody in a cathedral city or precincts notices anything except the tradesmen. A canon is no novelty here, I assure you, and the bag I will be carrying—what of it?"

Gripping his stick, Witherspoon wrenched himself back a little. The Luger followed him.

"Must take the strain off my sound leg," he explained.

"Oh, quite so. An accident, or natal eccentricity?"

"An accident."

"Well, accident or no, darkness increases. This to hurry you!" There was a noise of a supercharged champagne-cork, followed by the smack of a bullet on the far cathedral wall, the projectile shaving Witherspoon's ear.

The verger reacted with commendable fortitude. He did not budge—only the automatic after-jerk of the head. He was again, and instantaneously, covered.

"Delightful velvety report," laughed his enemy. "As soft as the voice of the Church—not a soul outside these walls would hear it. Ha-ha-ha! A canon-bogus fires its shot! I may add there are plenty more whence came the last. The next I fire will kill you!"

Witherspoon, skilled in reading bluff or truth in the human animal, knew instantly the man meant exactly what he said. The quiet braggadocio and self-assurance indeed spelled "killer."

The situation was silently desperate, the most sinister, lonely atmosphere there is. Witherspoon knew that in a few moments either . . .

Looking down the nave-aisle, he murmured abstractedly, "O.K. I've no other alternative, have I? But at least tell me exactly what you *do* want. We have a saying here, 'The visitor comes first.'"

"Sensible fellow," replied the other. "I want the Offa Ruby. I have the wherewithal to open the Chapter House safe—you assuredly do not possess the key—and extract this priceless egg from the nest. But I must ask you for your own master-key to enter the august chamber—that you do carry. You will precede me thither—verge me, so to speak—and then I shall certainly take drastic means to see you do not inconvenience me while I work."

"Oh, all right," Witherspoon answered with resignation, not turning his head. He was concentrating on the mental image of a smiling face at his own height and backed by the oncoming darkness.

"Are you going to move?" demanded the other. "My patience——"

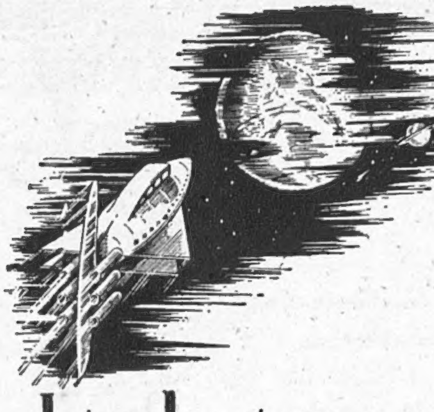
From the direction of the gloomy vista a clear-cut, authoritative voice rang out: "*What are you two up to?*"

A split half-second—and Witherspoon struck! The stick described a lovely upward cut—perfectly timed, perfectly placed, landing neatly on the base of the skull. The Luger fell to the ground, the body, knees sagging, collapsed, and the forehead hit the flags with a horrid crack.

"That's that!" breathed Witherspoon fiercely, then added with real gratitude: "Thanks a lot, old Timmy, wherever you are. You'd have made a first-rate ventriloquist's doll, you old image! I almost *saw* you at the bottom of the nave-aisle."

THE END.

**All the characters and incidents in this story are imaginary.*



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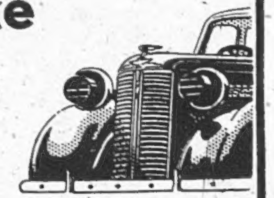

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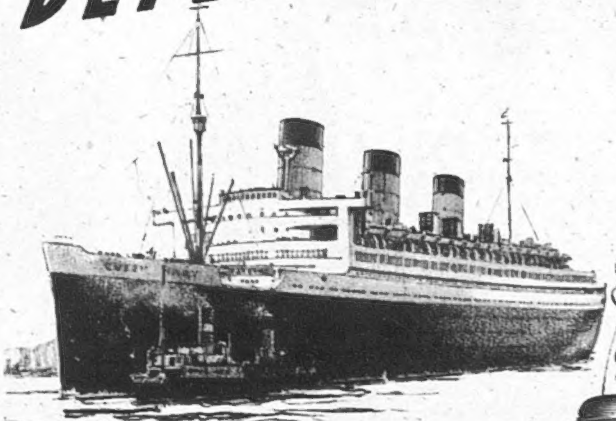

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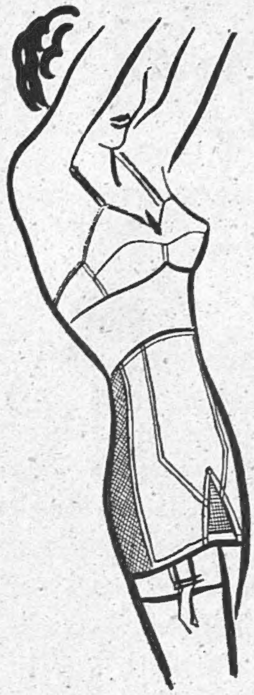

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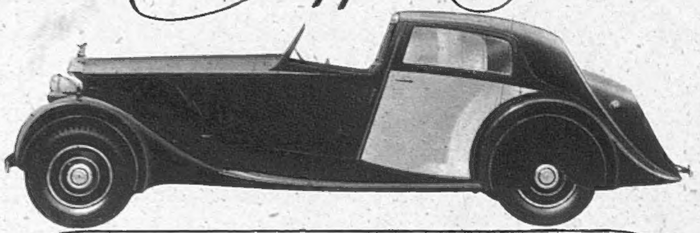

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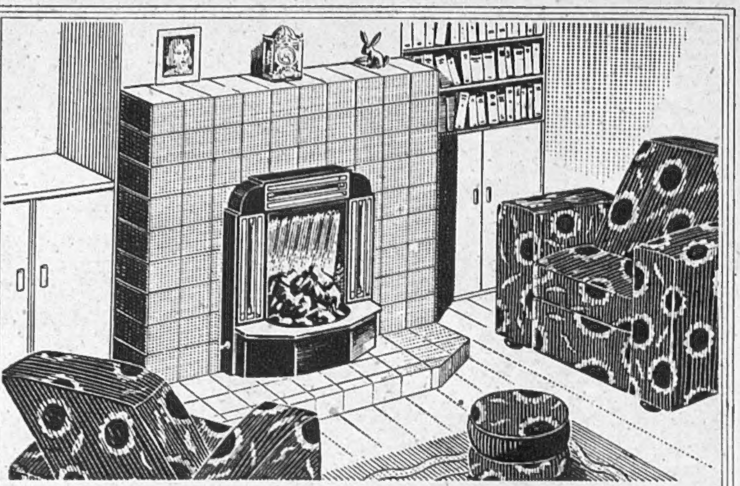

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